

# A223 Module guide

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# A223 Module guide

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Welcome to A223 *Early modern Europe: society and culture 1500–1780*. We hope you enjoy studying this module. This guide provides an introduction to the module, its materials and the skills you will acquire by studying them. Read through the whole guide now – and you may well want to refer back to it as you work through the module, especially as you begin revising for the examination.

The first part of this guide introduces you to the skills that you will develop through the module. The second part provides an overview of the materials that you will use in your study, the assessment and other resources. The final part provides technical support.

## Studying history at level 2

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You will have studied some history at level 1, but you may well be wondering what is different about studying history at level 2. The most obvious difference is that this module gives you a chance to really get to grips with a particular period of history – the early modern period from 1500 to 1780. You will study the particular characteristics of life in Europe during this period, and follow developments over time to get a sense of continuity and change over the period.

To study history at level 2, you need to build on the skills you learned at level 1. In this module you will read more material and you will be expected to apply a greater depth of analysis. This should not alarm you: the module is designed to develop your skills.

Reading is an important activity of academic historians. In order to get a history degree you will need to undertake a lot of reading. By reading you will expand the breadth of your understanding of what happened in the past, in different places and at different periods. At the same time, it will help you to deepen your understanding, as you begin to make connections and comparisons. For example, in this module you will read about the changes in religious faith associated with the Reformation in different contexts – at the level of family life, in communities such as towns, and how it led to war and conflict across whole states.

During your level 1 studies of history you will have read fairly short passages from primary and secondary sources. At level 2 you are expected to read much longer pieces (which will prepare you for study at level 3). Don't worry – we will teach you the skills of tackling these longer works and we have allowed enough time for all this reading. An important skill in this module is to apply different ways of reading. Usually you read sources straight through, to gain an understanding of the contents and the argument. However, it is sometimes appropriate to skim-read: this allows you to pick up an overview of the material. You can then focus your attention on a particularly relevant section of the text.

## Using different sources

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At level 2 you are also expected to spend more time thinking about the *interpretation* of past events, using both primary and secondary sources.

## Primary sources

The 'raw materials' for all historical study are primary sources. In this module, you will use a wide range of sources – documents, images and objects, from elegant oil paintings and chocolate pots to everyday objects such as coins, or printed illustrations taken from ballads. At level 2 study, there is a greater emphasis on interpreting primary source materials. When confronted with a painting or a document, it is easy to focus on the content – what it tells us about events or people and their activities. Often, we can gain insights that were not intended by the original authors. For example, documents from law courts were produced as a record of legal disputes, but we can learn a lot about how people went about their everyday lives from the evidence they gave. We can even find out about the buildings where they lived – accounts of a quarrel overheard by neighbours suggests that the internal walls of London houses were thin or full of holes!

When reading or looking at primary sources we need to go beyond the content and place the material in context. You need to ask yourself who produced the material and why because this may affect how we think about the content. Perhaps a painter wanted to flatter his sitter by portraying him as a great man, or a document was written to provoke a sympathetic response from its readers. When was the material produced? Perhaps the description is inaccurate because it was written sometime after the events and must have relied on second-hand accounts. Details of the origin, history and ownership of an item are known as its provenance.

Reading primary sources in English from the early modern period requires a special skill. At that time, spelling was not standardised: instead writers wrote down words as they sounded. As a result, they can add extra letters ('itt' for 'it'), or substitute other letters ('blewe' for 'blue') or leave out letters ('yong' for 'young'). The spelling of people's names can also vary. The grammar can also look a little strange. When describing someone's age, early modern writers did not use the phrase 'x years old' but instead 'of x years'. There are no hard and fast rules to reading early modern texts, but if you can't immediately work out what is meant, try saying the words aloud. To help you we've given the modern spelling of words that you may find puzzling in brackets or, in a few cases, a transcription of the whole document. Some of the readings reproduced from other books make use of modernised spelling. The module materials also include some translations of documents from other languages.

## Secondary sources

Secondary sources – books, essays and journal articles – are written by historians long after the events they discuss, using a range of primary sources. Historians can never hope to produce a definitive account of the past: later authors always bring new insights, either by reading different sources or by applying new approaches to the study of events or periods. Every secondary source contains an argument or interpretation and historians are always trying to convince their readers that their work presents a better analysis than every account that has gone before. (In the module you will encounter examples of historians debating how to interpret the case of Martin Guerre.) Historians are also influenced by their own context: for example, the interest in women's history was inspired by the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

The development of history over time is called 'historiography' – it's easier to think of it as the history of history. We don't expect you to become an expert in historiography at level

2, but it will greatly enrich your studies if you can think about the approaches used by historians – are they focusing on social or political materials? Are they writing about the behaviour of men and women (gender history) or towns (urban history)? It is always worth noting when an article was written – is it 20 years old? (It is still worth reading some old material if it offered an important new interpretation in its day.) Or was it published very recently?

This module gives you one possible account of early modern Europe. It brings a social and cultural approach to the period and is shaped by the skills and interests of the module team. It will, after a period of years, be superseded by newer accounts bringing a different analysis or new materials to the events we cover here.

## Note taking

As you read, it is always worth taking notes. Jotting down notes will help you answer the questions set in exercises. When reading longer passages in the module books or other sources such as articles, notes will help you to keep a record of the main points of the content and the argument – which will come in useful when you are working on assignments or revising for the final examination. Be selective with your notes – for example, when you are working on an assignment focus on the ideas, questions and points that are relevant to your essay.

Some students take notes by cutting and pasting relevant snippets from a text. While this gives a record of what you've read, it doesn't help you to develop your understanding. Writing notes requires you to reframe the ideas in your own words and is a useful test that you have understood what is being discussed. Always remember to write down a reference to what you are reading and the page numbers of important ideas or pieces of evidence – that way you can be sure you can find them again later.

## A223 – the materials and how to use them

### The study planner

The *study planner* on the module website provides a list of the items for study each week, in the order you should study them (you will be directed to the online sessions from the print chapter). It provides a checklist of what you need to do, and will help you to plan your work for each week. Please note, the PDFs of the chapters on the study planner are PDF versions of the chapters in the print book. The module website also includes all your assessment materials and a range of resources to help you work through the module. There is advice on using the OU Library website and on study skills, suggestions for further reading and copies of the glossaries from the printed books.

### Printed books

Much of the materials you need for your study are provided through three *module books*. Each explores the themes of the module through different contexts – the lives of

individuals and families, groups and communities, and finally the continent of Europe. The books include exercises, some of which are based on readings at the end of each chapter. *Online sessions*, linked to the chapter materials, can be accessed through the module website. These include exercises based around reading primary and secondary sources, listening to audios and watching videos, and using an interactive map. Ideally, you should work through the printed material and online sessions in the sequence set out in each chapter, so try to plan ahead to make sure you have access to the website at the relevant points. However, if you can't access the module website during the course of working through the printed chapter don't worry – you can complete the online sessions when you've finished reading the chapter.

## Online material

Don't skip the online (or printed) exercises. They are not optional, but form a very important part of the module. They not only give you information, but by actively engaging in the exercises, rather than passively reading the discussion, you are more likely to remember the ideas discussed in the chapter, which in turn should help you in your assessment.

Online resources form an important part of your studies. This reflects how increasing access to the wealth of historical materials available through the internet has transformed the work of historians over the last decade. Instead of requiring expensive and time-consuming trips to libraries (sometimes abroad), materials appear on your screen in seconds – academic journals, ebooks, reference works, and primary sources. This module will introduce you to just some of the materials available.

## The set book

As well as the online material, this module uses a *set book*, Beat Kümin (ed.) *The European World, 1500–1800* (London, Routledge, 2018). This is integrated into the module materials and you will need to acquire a copy. Be sure to get the current edition of the book.

## Images and objects

Images and objects are used throughout the module to provide insights into the past. The *Early modern world in objects* section on the module website is a gallery of images of objects, with audio and video discussing what evidence they provide for historians. Some of the objects are referred to in the book chapters, but you will also be directed to the gallery through the study planner.

## Independent study

Each study week, part of your time is given over to *independent study* exercises. This is a chance for you to explore topics in greater depth, and we give you a choice of guided tasks so that you can pick the one which interests you. Some independent study exercises are based on reading research articles, while others take you to databases and

reference works where you can find out more about a topic. You need to include some references to your independent study exercises in at least one TMA. Although there are different options, the tasks will always be similar, and require the same skills. Independent study materials never form a key component of assessment, so you will not be put at a disadvantage by choosing one option over another.

## Further reading

If you want to find out more about a particular topic, there is a *further reading* list for each book in the Resources tab of the module website listing a number of important sources for each chapter. This is optional: you do not need to read any of these works in order to complete the module.

## Glossary and transcripts

To help your work, there is a *glossary* of historical terms in each book and online. We have also provided *transcripts* of some primary sources where the language is difficult to follow.

## Online forums

The module has a number of *online forums*, accessed through the module website. These enhance your study experience and help you to develop key skills by communicating your ideas to others, expanding your knowledge, and picking up tips from other students.

If you want to brush up your skills in participating in forums, consult this guidance on [online forums](#).

## The Open University Library

The Open University Library gives you access to ebooks, electronic journals and databases which are part of the directed study and the independent study components of the module. A selection of materials on early modern history can be found by clicking on 'Library resources' and choosing 'Selected resources for your study' then 'History' and 'Early Modern (1600-1800)' from the menus.

If you are unfamiliar with using the OU Library website, tutorials and guidance documents will help you to access different materials – these can be found either from the OU Library home page or from the Library resources section of the module website. If you have not used the OU Library in the past, try to find time to complete the tutorial, 'Getting Started with the OU Library'. It can be found in 'Library resources'.

Don't forget that to access many of the resources in the OU Library you will need to log in with your Open University Computer Username (or OUCU) and password. These details can be found on the letter you received when you first registered with the OU. **Keep your username and password in a safe but convenient place: you will be using them regularly.**

## Tuition

You will be allocated a tutor who will contact you at the start of the module. Your tutor is responsible for marking and giving you feedback on your assignments. This feedback is an essential part of the tuition you receive on the module, so you must read it carefully and use it to help you improve your work.

Your tutor will also answer questions regarding your study. However, tutors are not employed full time by The Open University, so you should not expect him or her to be available all of the time. He or she may let you know how best to get in touch, for instance by indicating good times to ring or letting you know which days he or she checks the forums or emails. This will give you some idea of when you can expect a response.

Throughout the module, you will have opportunities to participate in face-to-face and online tutorials. Our experience is that students benefit greatly from this teaching and from working with other students. We strongly advise that you make use of this resource. You will be informed of the dates and venues of tutorials.

For advice on the difference between face-to-face and online tutorials view this information on [communicating online](#).

## Learning outcomes for A223

A223 aims to convey a body of knowledge, but also, and perhaps more importantly, to teach skills in the analysis and understanding of source materials, both primary and secondary, and the development and presentation of convincing arguments supported by appropriate evidence. Studying A223 should enable you to acquire skills that will help if you go on to study other modules, and will also be useful in the wider world. The assignments on A223 have been designed to help you develop these skills and demonstrate their achievement. The aims of the module can be described in terms of learning outcomes.

|                             | After completing A223 you should be able to:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Knowledge and understanding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• understand how knowledge of the past is arrived at, by learning how historians use both primary sources and secondary materials in a variety of media.</li><li>• be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of continuity and change in early modern Europe</li><li>• be aware of the range and variety of sources (written, visual and numerical) used by historians in studying social and cultural history.</li></ul> |

|                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Cognitive skills                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be able to evaluate historical evidence from a variety of sources both written and visual, and see the need to adjust your approach to the text according to its nature and original purpose</li> <li>• be able to examine and analyse critically the work of historians; summarise, analyse and synthesise historical knowledge and arguments.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Key skills                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demonstrate that you can present an argument clearly for a reasonably knowledgeable audience, using a variety of forms (including essays, document analyses and presentations), analysing historical problem, selecting appropriate evidence and using it to support a scholarly argument</li> <li>• understand the need to build on feedback on your work, reflecting on your own performance and acting appropriately on advice</li> <li>• develop knowledge and analysis of sources by exploring a range of materials through independent study exercises</li> <li>• be able to use a range of relevant and appropriate sources, including online library resources, and reference them appropriately in writing.</li> </ul> |
| Practical and/or professional skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be able to engage with others through different forms of communication including written assessment and online forums, and respond to feedback</li> <li>• be able to find and select a range of information using methods outlined in the module.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

## Assessment

You will be assessed through six tutor-marked assignments (TMAs) and an end-of-module examination. Details of each TMA, the examination, and assessment policies can be found in the 'Assessment' section of the module website.

The TMAs ask you to analyse primary source materials, present essays, and prepare a summary and a presentation. Help in tackling each TMA is provided in the A223 Assessment guide, and the dates for the submission of each TMA feature on the study planner.

The final examination is a three-hour examination, consisting of three parts, which include primary source analyses and essay questions that draw on one or more chapters. You will be given advance notice of the topics covered in the examination to help you to structure your revision. Time for revision has been set aside at the end of the module. A Specimen Examination Paper, advice and a revision forum will help you.



## Support

There may be points in your studies at which you need some extra help – never be afraid to ask, no matter how tiny or trivial the question may seem. The chances are that others are experiencing similar difficulties.

To help you find the right person to direct your query to, here is a quick reference guide:

| Problem                                                                                                                     | Who to contact                     | How to contact                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Questions about the study materials and the assignments.                                                                    | Your tutor                         | You can find his or her contact details on the module website.                                                  |
| Difficulties accessing OU Library resources; queries about finding and using information.                                   | OU Library Helpdesk                | You can find details on the <a href="#">Contact us</a> page on the Library website.                             |
| Difficulties submitting TMAs via the eTMA system; problems accessing the module website or materials on the module website. | OU Computing Helpdesk              | You can find details on the <a href="#">Computing Helpdesk</a> page of the <a href="#">OU Computing Guide</a> . |
| Queries about OU procedures; queries about disabilities and additional requirements.                                        | Student Services – Learner Support | Contact details are listed on the module website.                                                               |

## The Computing Helpdesk

The OU offers a telephone helpdesk dealing with technical computing queries to all students currently studying a module with a computing element. The Helpdesk staff can provide you with help on installing and running OU-provided software on your computer, and they can also sometimes help with basic use of software and software errors. Many of the OU's networked computing services require the use of an OU computing username (OUCU) and password, and the Helpdesk can also assist with username and/or password problems. Contact details can be found on the [Computing Helpdesk](#) web page. Once you are successfully up and running, there is much helpful information and details of where to get further technical help in the OU [Computing Guide](#).

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